

## **DECISION RECORD FOR INTRODUCTION OF NEW FISH SPECIES**

**Water Name:** Largent Bend FAS pond #2 and pond #3

**County:** Cascade

**Legal Description:** Largent Bend FAS is located in sections 29 and 32, Township 21 North, Range 1 East

**Fish Species Proposed for Introduction:** Alternative 3 of the draft EA specifically proposed to 1) stock largemouth bass from the state's hatchery source in ponds 2 and 3, 2) stock black crappie in pond 3 through a wild fish transfer of adult fish from a source deemed suitable by the FWP Fish Health Committee, 3) stock rainbow trout and brook trout in ponds 2 and 3 to provide the second tier of the fishery. If needed to control fish populations, male northern pike may be introduced through a wild fish transfer or stocking of tiger muskie could occur if a source is available.

The strategy for developing the fishery resources in pond #3 involves establishing a population of black crappie as the primary fishery. Rainbow trout and brook trout would be stocked to develop the second tier of the fishery. Largemouth bass, tiger muskie and male northern pike would be used primarily to control stunted crappie, and secondarily to provide another tier to the fishery.

The strategy for developing the fishery resources in the pond #2 involves stocking largemouth bass to reduce the number of black bullheads and provide the primary tier to the fishery. Rainbow trout and brook trout would be stocked to develop the second tier of the fishery. If largemouth bass proved to be ineffective in reducing the number of black bullheads, tiger muskie and male northern pike would be used primarily to reduce the numbers of black bullheads and secondarily to provide another tier to the fishery.

The draft EA stated that "... if stocking male northern pike was considered at a later date, a supplemental analysis would be conducted..." We believe this information in the draft EA was ambiguous and necessitates clarification. If stocking male northern pike is deemed necessary to control black bullheads or crappie, the aspects of a supplemental analysis would involve primarily process issues such as 1) conducting a disease screen from the donor source, 2) applying for and securing a certificate of transfer of wild fish through the Montana Fish Health Committee, and 3) properly sexing pike during the spring of the year to ensure only males are transferred. We believe the significance criteria for stocking tiger muskie or male northern pike would be similar because both options involve introducing a population of predator fish with finite life span. Tiger muskie are sexually infertile and stocking a single sex of northern pike would not result in a self sustaining population. The reason male northern pike were considered is because spermiating males can be conclusively sexed by expressing sperm during a field examination in the spring of the year, whereas females cannot be conclusively differentiated from sexually immature males during a field examination.

**Description of Public Notification/Review Process:**

The draft EA was posted on the department's website on March 22, 2011 and the public comment period remained open for 30 days.

Largent Bend FAS is located within the aboriginal range of the Blackfeet Nation. A copy of the EA was sent to a representative of the Blackfeet Nation on March 24, 2011.

**Summary of Public Comments:**

The Blackfeet Nation submitted a comment indicating there were no specific concerns with the proposed action.

No other comments were received through April 23, 2011.

**Recommendation:**

Based on the department's proposal, which outlined the benefits and risks of stocking black crappie, rainbow trout, brook trout, largemouth bass, tiger muskie and male northern pike in Largent Bend pond #2 and # 3 and the fact that no substantive public comments were received, it is my recommendation that the proposed action be implemented as described in the draft EA. With the additional information provided in this Record of Decision which clarifies the supplemental analysis involving stocking male northern pike, the draft EA becomes the final.

Black crappie will be stocked in Largent Bend pond #3 to provide the primary tier to the fishery. Rainbow trout and brook trout will be stocked in pond # 3 to provide the second tier to the fishery. Largemouth bass, tiger muskie and male northern pike will be used to control crappie and provide another tier to this fishery.

Largemouth bass will be stocked in pond #2 to reduce the number of black bullheads and to provide the primary tier to this fishery. Rainbow trout and brook trout will be stocked to provide the second tier to this fishery. Tiger muskie and male northern pike would be stocked to reduce black bullhead numbers if largemouth bass do not fulfill the objectives of the project. Tiger muskie and male northern pike will provide another tier to this fishery.

Both ponds will be stocked with the aforementioned species using the aforementioned strategies to achieve the goal of creating multi-tiered year-round fisheries in ponds 2 and 3 that would provide at least 150 angler days per year. The secondary benefits would be to provide unique angling opportunities for black crappie and tiger muskie.



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**Regional Fisheries Manager**

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**April 26, 2011**  
**Date**